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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/555,657

11/04/2005

Tsumoru Ohata

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MCDERMOTT WILL & EMERY LLP
600 13TH STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20005-3096

EXAMINER

LEE, CYNTHIA K

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1745

MAIL DATE

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08/22/2007

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/555,657

Applicant(s)

OHATA ET AL.

Examiner

Cynthia Lee

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 July 2007.
- 2a) ☒ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 16 July 2007 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 7/16/07, 5/15/07.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

Response to Amendment

This Office Action is responsive to the amendment filed on 7/16/2007. Claims 10-20 have been added. Claims 1-20 are pending. Claims 1-7 have been amended.

The Objection to the Drawing has been withdrawn.

The 35 USC 112, 2nd paragraph rejection has been withdrawn.

Upon further consideration, the instant claims are rejected under new grounds of rejections. Claims 1-20 are finally rejected for reasons necessitated by applicant's amendment.

Information Disclosure Statement

The Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) filed 7/16/2007 and 5/15/2007 has been placed in the application file and the information referred to therein has been considered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 2-4, 11, 12, and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. In claims 2-4, 11, 12, and 17, "said plurality of primary particles" lacks antecedent basis.

Claim Objections

Claim 15 is objected to under 37 CFR 1.75 as being a substantial duplicate of claim 7. When two claims in an application are duplicates or else are so close in

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content that they both cover the same thing, despite a slight difference in wording, it is proper after allowing one claim to object to the other as being a substantial duplicate of the allowed claim. See MPEP § 706.03(k).

Claims Analysis

To avoid 35 USC 112, 2nd paragraph issues, the limitation "indefinite-shape particle" has been defined as "shapes having knots, bumps, or bulges based on the primary particles, that is, for example, shapes like dendrite, grape clusters, or coral, unlike shapes that are spherical or egg-shaped, or that are similar to such shapes" as supported by the Specification pg 5 paragraph [0009].

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102/103

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-6, 8-14, 16-19 are rejected 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Koike (JP 07-220759).

Koike discloses a secondary battery comprising a positive electrode, a negative electrode, a coating film (applicant's porous electron-insulating layer) adhered to the

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anode (see working example 2). A separator is present comprising a fine porous film. The coating comprises a slurry of alumina powder and PVdF mixed in n-methyl pyrrolidone.

Koike does not expressly disclose that the slurry comprises indefinite shape particles comprising dendrites, grape clusters, or coral. Although Fig. 1 and 2 of Koike discloses spherical particles aligned, the Examiner notes that they are merely illustrative and not drawn to scale. Because of the presence of the binder (PVdF), the alumina particles mixed with PVdF will naturally (or inherently) form indefinite shapes, such as dendrites, grape clusters, or coral.

Regarding claim 4 and 12, Koike discloses that the particle size of the fine particles (applicant's primary particles) is between 0.1 μm to 50 μm [0030]. It is noted that several fine particles with the size 0.1 μm aggregated would read on the limitation "not more than 10 μm ."

The Examiner notes that claims 3, 11, 16 are product-by-process claims. The claim does not specify to what extent the particles are melted. According to the process, a plurality of primary particles completely fused together would form one large particle. Thus, it is noted that each fine particle of Koike aggregates to form indefinite shape particles and reads on the product made by the process because primary particles do not exist in the final product. Further, with respect to claim 16, each of the fine particles of alumina is inherently crystalline and would be indistinguishable from a particle that is formed by several crystalline particles.

Claims 1-6, 9-14, 16-19 are rejected 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Delnik (US 5948464).

Delnik discloses a secondary battery comprising a positive electrode, a negative electrode, a separator (applicant's porous electron-insulating layer) adhered to the anode and cathode. See fig 1. A separator is present comprising a fine porous film. The precursor separator solution comprises silica filler and a polymer binder (see Abstract). The separator comprises indefinite-shape particles comprising shapes of dendrites, grape clusters, or coral. See Fig. 2.

Regarding claim 4 and 12, Koike discloses that the particle size of the fine particles (applicant's primary particles) is between 0.01 μm to 1 μm (6:60-67). It is noted that several fine particles in the above range aggregated would read on the limitation "not more than 10 μm ."

The Examiner notes that claims 3, 11, 16 are product-by-process claims. The claim does not specify to what extent the particles are melted. According to the process, a plurality of primary particles completely fused together would form one large particle. Thus, it is noted that each fine particle of Delnik aggregates to form indefinite shape particles and reads on the product made by the process because primary particles do not exist in the final product. Further, with respect to claim 16, each of the fine particles of alumina is inherently crystalline and would be indistinguishable from a particle that is formed by several crystalline particles.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-4 and 8-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Takata (US 6638988).

Takata discloses a secondary battery comprising a positive electrode, a negative electrode, a separator (applicant's porous electron-insulating layer) adhered to the anode and cathode (6:55-7:15). A separator is present comprising a porous film. The separator is made of hydrotalcite and polypropylene resin and the mixture is kneaded by a biaxial kneader. See Example 1.

Takata does not disclose indefinite shape particles. However, Takata discloses of using organic fillers. See 5:55-60 for the particular organic fillers. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to substitute hydrotalcite for Takata's organic filler because organic fillers and inorganic fillers are art-recognized equivalents (3:40-45). See MPEP 2144.06. It is noted that when a mixture of organic fillers and a resin binder are kneaded in a kneader, the organic filler particles will naturally aggregate and form indefinite-shape particles comprising shapes of dendrites, grape clusters, or coral. Once the examiner provides a rationale tending to show that the claimed product appears to be the same or similar to

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that of the prior art, although produced by a different process, the burden shifts to applicant to come forward with evidence establishing an unobvious difference between the claimed product and the prior art product. In re Marosi, 710 F.2d 798, 802, 218 USPQ 289, 292 (Fed. Cir. 1983) The Applicants are also advised to provide evidence as to why the modified separator of Takata with the organic filler does not read on the instant set of claims.

The Examiner notes that claims 3 and 11 are product-by-process claims. It is noted that when a mixture of organic fillers and a resin binder are kneaded in a kneader, the organic filler particles will naturally aggregate and form indefinite-shape particles comprising shapes of dendrites, grape clusters, or coral. Once the examiner provides a rationale tending to show that the claimed product appears to be the same or similar to that of the prior art, although produced by a different process, the burden shifts to applicant to come forward with evidence establishing an unobvious difference between the claimed product and the prior art product. In re Marosi, 710 F.2d 798, 802, 218 USPQ 289, 292 (Fed. Cir. 1983) The Applicants are also advised to provide evidence as to why the modified separator of Takata with the organic filler does not read on the instant set of claims.

Another interpretation of claims 3 and 11 is that the claim does not specify to what extent the particles are melted. According to the process, a plurality of primary particles completely fused together would form one large particle. Thus, it is noted that each fine particle of Takata aggregates to form indefinite shape particles and reads on

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the product made by the process because primary particles do not exist in the final product.

Regarding claim 4 and 12, Koike discloses that the particle size of the fine particles (applicant's primary particles) is not more than 1 μm (3:60-65). It is noted that several particles in the size not more than 1 μm aggregated would read on the limitation "not more than 10 μm ."

Claims 7, 15, and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Koike (JP 07-220759) as applied to claims 1, 10, and 16, in view of Waterhouse (US 4363856).

Koike discloses all the elements of claim 1, 10 and 16 and are incorporated herein. Koike does not disclose that the resin binder comprises a polyacrylic acid derivative. Koike discloses that the resin comprises PVdF resin. However, Waterhouse teaches of using acrylic acid as a binder for the separator (3:35). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to substitute acrylic acid of Waterhouse for Koike's PVdF resin because it has been held by the court that the selection of a known material based on its suitability for its intended use is *prima facie* obvious. *Sinclair & Carroll Co. v. Interchemical Corp.*, 325 U.S. 327, 65 USPQ 297 (1945). See MPEP 2144.07.

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Claims 7, 15, and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Delnik (US 5948464) as applied to claims 1, 10, and 16, in view of Waterhouse (US 4363856).

Delnik discloses all the elements of claim 1, 10 and 16 and are incorporated herein. Delnik does not disclose that the resin binder comprises a polyacrylic acid derivative. Delnik discloses that the resin comprises PVC, PVdF, and EPDM resin (7:5-15). However, Waterhouse teaches of using acrylic acid as a binder for the separator (3:35). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to substitute acrylic acid of Waterhouse for Delnik's resin because it has been held by the court that the selection of a known material based on its suitability for its intended use is *prima facie* obvious. *Sinclair & Carroll Co. v. Interchemical Corp.*, 325 U.S. 327, 65 USPQ 297 (1945). See MPEP 2144.07.

Claims 7 and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Takata (US 6638988) as applied to claim 1 in view of Waterhouse (US 4363856).

Takata discloses all the elements of claim 1 and are incorporated herein. Takata does not disclose that the resin binder comprises a polyacrylic acid derivative. Takata discloses that the resin comprises a variety of resin particles. Among these, homopolymers of styrene, vinyl ketone, acrylonitrile, methyl methacrylate, ethyl methacrylate, glycidyl methacrylate, glycidyl acrylate, or methyl acrylate, copolymers of two or more kinds of monomers selected from the above group of monomers, and condensation polymers such as melamine and urea may be mentioned (3:50-60). However, Waterhouse teaches of using acrylic acid as a binder for the separator (3:35). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the

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invention was made to substitute acrylic acid of Waterhouse for Takata's resin because it has been held by the court that the selection of a known material based on its suitability for its intended use is *prima facie* obvious. *Sinclair & Carroll Co. v. Interchemical Corp.*, 325 U.S. 327, 65 USPQ 297 (1945). See MPEP 2144.07.

Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Cynthia Lee whose telephone number is 571-272-8699. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 8:30am-5pm.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Susy Tsang-Foster can be reached on 571-272-1293. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

ckl

Cynthia Lee

Patent Examiner



SUSYTSANG-FOSTER
PRIMARY EXAMINER